

# Money for books?

## School committee discusses the 2009 capital budget

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As the end of the year creeps in, the town and school department are crunching numbers together to make the December 12 budget deadline set by Town Manager Richard MacDonald. The school committee doubled their meeting schedule in order to devote sufficient time to the budget, and allow themselves time for feedback from the Fiscal Advisory Committee and the town on their proposed fiscal 2009 school budget.

At Wednesday night's school committee meeting, business manager Mickey McGonagle reviewed the capital budget, including technology expenses, textbooks and building maintenance, for the next five years. He anticipates the school's capital budget needs for 2009 to be \$1.2 million, with a large portion being made up of new textbooks and technology equipment, representing \$731,743.

McGonagle explained that the definition of a capital budget item is, it must cost \$10,000 or more and have a useful life of at least five years. For the past five years the capital budget has not received any separate funding. One of the items included are textbooks, which not been funded for the past five years, he said. Although textbooks are factored into the school capital budget this year, he suggests the school committee prioritize their capital items and possibly include some money for textbooks in the operational budget.

As part of the budget planning, McGonagle discussed the money needed for the renovations of the high school and middle school. He anticipated that the middle school renovation needs to take place in five years and will cost an estimated \$40 to \$50 million. The middle school, after renovation, would then be turned into the high school and the high school building would become the middle school. Two years after that renovation, the high school building, would need to be renovated, costing about \$35 to \$40 million. McGonagle said that his estimate was very rough, but once the

numbers get that high they just become, "a big number."

At the close of the last school year the School Committee, along with the Board of Selectmen, submitted a letter to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), inquiring about grant money for renovations on each school building. After the MSBA received an overabundant amount of applications they asked each district to prioritize their requests and submit the most needed project. Since then, the school submitted a request for renovation on the Chandler School roof. McGonagle said he spoke to a representative from the MSBA this week about coming out to look at the roof, after learning the request was just for a roof the MSBA decided it was not a high priority and cancelled their visit. However, the MSBA said they would visit every district with a request by the end of the school year, McGonagle added.

Without knowing when, or if, the MSBA would be funding Duxbury's school building renovation projects McGonagle factored the costs into the long-term budgets. "We have a long road to go before the end," he said.

For the upcoming capital budget McGonagle said the high school technology budget would require \$517,893, the middle school would require \$70,350, the Alden school would require \$56,500 and the Chandler School would require \$67,000, totaling \$731,743 for the entire technology budget.

The second largest piece of the capital budget came through the need for new textbooks. DHS textbooks total \$76,484, DMS textbooks total \$66,894, Alden textbooks total, \$45,857, and Chandler textbooks total \$33,258, for a combined sum of \$223,493. McGonagle said because there is a five-year requirement for budgeting new textbooks the school will have to budget for textbooks. Many of the textbooks are outdated, some with copyrights from 1992, and chemistry books without the addition of two new elements. "You need them now," he said. McGonagle said he also advises the board to plan ahead for five years from now when they will again be required to purchase new textbooks.

Part of the capital budget, including technology updates and textbooks

SEE CAPITAL BUDGET, PAGE 4

Page 4 DUXBURY REPORTER October 12, 2007

## Capital budget discussed

FROM CAPITAL BUDGET, PAGE 1

updates, are combining the two elements for on-line books and laptops to be used in the classrooms. As the world becomes more Web-based, many educational tools are becoming available on-line. Part of the technology budget was for the purchase of new laptop computers for the science labs that students would be able to use instead of a book, while at the same time working interactively within the classroom. McGonagle said the costs initially

would be high in order to transform the classrooms for Web-based learning, but could save costs in the long run.

The projected five-year capital budget, is \$1.2 million for 2009, \$5 million for 2010, which includes budgeting for school roof renovations totaling \$4.5 million, an estimated \$269,000 for 2011, \$218,000 for 2012, and \$219,000 for 2013. McGonagle said once the school plays catch-up with textbooks and technology the capital budget will level out and come in a much lower